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Taking the side of matter in the performing arts: historical, aesthetic and epistemological perspectives

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This eighth issue of *Agôn* considers the performing arts in terms of matter, no longer only from the point of view of what it signifies (shows, represents, evokes, symbolizes), but also what it does, its impact on performers and/or others who are in contact with it; on the environments where it is deployed and manipulated, and on the history, aesthetics and epistemology of the performing arts.

Theater materials

When we talk about “performing” arts, we generally focus on human participation and relationships (artists, technicians, administrators, spectators and so on), although we are well aware that a show (whether theater, dance, circus, puppet etc.) cannot be conceived independently of materials – scenery, props, apparatus,¹ costumes for a start, but also those used to make the spaces, whether purpose-built or adapted, in which a work is performed and where it is viewed.

Pigments and flowers, wood and stone

In ancient Greece, the rare texts that speak of the birth of theater in the 6th century B.C. are less concerned with dramatic composition than with the material origins of theatrical performance: it is said that the first action that enabled the “proto-poet”, Thespis, to invent theatrical performances was smearing his face with white lead, a pigment of mineral origin, and then with multicolored purslane flowers, before

developing the first masks made of fine linen: these legendary first experiments bear witness to the importance of vegetable matter on stage, essential for making and coloring masks and costumes.²

The invention of the theater as a building specifically intended for putting on shows has also to do with materials (and not just space design)³: the ways in which wood and stone both complemented and worked against each other affected the first centuries of theatrical performances in Athens. The first theaters were temporary wooden structures set up on the agora. Plays were performed with no scenery or *skene* (stage building), and at the beginning probably consisted of sung and danced exchanges between a chorus and a single actor.⁴ The physical qualities of the scaffold seating allowed spectators to make an audible contribution to shows: apparently they were in the habit of expressing their reactions by stamping their feet until the day that the stands collapsed... An anecdote links this fact, which may or may not be authentic, to the career of Aeschylus himself.⁵ While the story may have been invented, it is nonetheless important for understanding how the ancients themselves saw the invention of the theater as a building: the weakness of the material that gave way under the spectators' weight helps to explain the transition from this proto-theatre to a more permanent construction on the southern slope of the Acropolis hill, on the site where the Theatre of Dionysos still stands today.

However, the use of wood hung on during the 5th century and gave performances a certain mobility, allowing the chorus and actors (now numbering two or three) to move around freely: wooden platforms and altars could be removed; the *skene*, a modest hut set up at the back of the stage without hiding the horizon, could hardly be taken for a palace, but was a space that greatly increased staging possibilities (actors and chorus could go in and out, change masks and costumes there, go upstairs to make use of a stage area at a higher level, machinery could be installed there, etc.). In the 4th century, stone replaced wood, which made the *skene* grander, as it then became a raised stage. On the other hand, the exchanges between actors and chorus became less fluid because of a greater separation of spaces, an indication that dramaturgy was undergoing major transformations. Actors and chorus now alternated more than they performed together. Soon, an ornamental back wall would block the view, which previously took in the city and its natural environment. The leading citizens of Rome would take their places in these stalls which had once been the *orchestra*, the area where the chorus and the actors acted and danced.

Is this transformation in the materials used to build the theater at the origin of the huge changes in dramaturgy that we can see in plays of the period, or is it rather a consequence of developments in dramatic composition (for example, of the gradually increasing gap between ancient theatrical intrigues and political events)? It is impossible to settle the question: in any case this evolution in both texts and space, determined by material constraints, suggest that they are inevitably interdependent.

The durable and the perishable, the visual and the tactile

The whole history of theater could be reviewed from the angle of materials – perishable or durable, simple or lavish, heavy or light, static or mobile, authentic or artificial – pressed into service for this art and its practice. Elie Konigson and Marie-Madeleine Mervant-Roux have indeed identified two big theatrical systems throughout history,

largely based on the economic and material conditions of amateur or professional practices. They distinguish:

- on the one hand, the touring company – a “fundamentally itinerant” theater, mobile, temporary, and therefore “marginalized by respectable society”;⁶
- on the other, an established theater, “a theater at the center of society”, whose actors, “are respected, prosperous” and “sedentary”. In this theater, the platform (designed to be “transportable”, and not dissimilar to a scaffold) gives way to a “stage”, a “wide”, “heavy” “podium”, which is “built directly on the ground”.

During the medieval period, this established theater was supported by amateur citizen actors and “played an essential role in maintaining values, social order and shared codes”. When professional troupes later settled down (starting, in France, in the first decades of the 17th century)⁷, they established a (more or less long-lasting) connection with a place that was itself more or less prestigious or enduring, showing once again how tightly woven together cultural and political, aesthetic and material histories are, and how they must therefore be considered together.⁸

This tension between temporary and durable materials is still present today– and eco-design issues are tending to give it renewed intensity.⁹ For instance, since 1997, François Tanguy has chosen to create and take on tour the Théâtre du Radeau’s shows in what he calls “the Tent”. For this director, this “Tent” (which is a space for both “transit” and “camping”, “with no wings or scenery”)¹⁰ is a way of keeping on the fringes of “theater bureaucracy”, and to occupy a territory without being totally committed to it. While the choice of the “tent-shape” (reminiscent of fairground tents) is significant in itself, the materials that it is made of are no less so. As Patrick Bouchain, the architect who worked with the Radeau, explains:

[François Tanguy] chose the lamest Tent, the sort set up for cocktails or in supermarket parking lots – that is his strength and his intelligence, because he was anticipating that they would know how to put up an aluminum tent like that in any town, because it’s an ordinary, standard tent.¹¹

While the tent could not in itself be more mundane, it is nonetheless not without physical constraints. Further on, Patrick Bouchain points out that this canvas is not very maneuverable, that it is “heavy to move and very large”. It turns out that the company’s mobility is actually quite relative – a relativity that refers back to the in-between position that the Théâtre du Radeau has decided to occupy, not quite an institution (established), and not quite outside (touring).

Taking to its logical conclusion the idea that theater construction materials not only testify to the social prestige attributed to this art (think of the velvet and gold in Italian-style theaters), but also determine, more structurally, the forms deployed there and their place in the public space and in cultural history, Edward Craig suggests, in *The Theatre – Advancing* (1919), making two theaters, one “durable” and the other “perishable”¹² – both relying on a perfect match between the theatrical forms that would be presented there and the materials used for the scenery and the building.

The “durable” theater (the one for staging “one Drama, unchangeable...for all time”) should therefore be:

[...] as superb in its strength as the noblest pyramid known to us. [...] I take it also that it will be built of the most costly materials, our care being lest we tarnish it or spoil it in any way. [...]

But do not let us be vague about these materials. Let us name them -- gold, silver, copper, bronze and other precious metals; diamonds, emeralds, rubies and other

precious stones; lapis-lazuli, crystals, ivory, ebony, malachite, marble, mosaic, glass stained with precious colours; silks finer than we have yet made; and all these things in the hands of men who delight to touch them and work with them.¹³

As these last statements demonstrate, the attention Craig gives to these precious materials is not just visual; it is also related to tactile, manual, and sensual pleasure, elicited by handling and working with them – a pragmatic and sensory dimension of theatrical practice that completely escaped 19th century historian of theater Becq de Fouquières, but that is at the heart of explorations undertaken by some contemporary artists (we will return to that later).

In *L'art de la mise en scène*, Becq de Fouquières does indeed explain that naturalist theater's concern for material accuracy is unfounded. Given that the spectator cannot touch the objects, it is enough for the staging to give him "accurate optical sensations":

From a distance, we cannot appreciate the polish of marble, the translucence of ivory, the fibrous texture of wood, the silky weave of fabric, any more than we can the skill with which it was woven or brocaded. Our optical sensations are limited to the color of the objects, to the tonal differences between light and shadow and the degree brilliant or dull nature of reflections.

Therefore at the theater, we only judge objects by their external appearance. Consequently, for the illusion to be sufficient, the theater must only provide us with appearances. What is the use of showing us a marble column, if a column of painted cardboard has the same effect? What is the point of upholstering furniture with expensive fabric, if a poorer quality would have the same effect? [...] Let us be clear that this is not the result of a covenant between the set designer and the audience. The theater [must] give us absolutely everything that we require - accurate optical sensations: and as we cannot touch to verify these sensations, there is no need to worry about an eventuality that will not happen.¹⁴

From the point of view of the spectator's experience and the reality of her perception, a case can be made for Becq de Fouquières' pragmatic reasoning (at least, as long as no cameras have found their way on to the stage, with screens providing close up views of the objects and materials on it). However he completely overlooks the experience and psychology of the actor – who actually is in close contact with the materials on stage. To sit in an armchair with luxurious or rough upholstery, open a heavy wooden door; handle very fragile ornaments: all this is not without consequences for the actor's real physical and psychological engagement – and it is precisely because the Naturalists intended to free themselves from theatrical conventions and base drama in "truth" (truth in ways of talking, moving, dressing and, deeper, in the intentions and emotions that drive the protagonists, depending on their situation and social *milieu*) that they demanded use of "accurate" accessories and sets.¹⁵ Instead of performing in artificial settings, in naturalist theater, the actors are immersed in spaces constructed with scrupulously reconstituted techniques and materials intended to ground and partly to determine their performance.

In contrast to "durable" theater, "perishable" theater would be for "improvised" and "spontaneous" forms, but Craig makes clear that this does not at all imply "something hardly worth consideration". He uses it "so as to distinguish it from the Durable Theatre, to place it apart; not that it is inferior to the Durable Theatre, only that it is different."¹⁶ Logically, the place and the materials that make it up would be sensitive and sensory, a reflection of this fundamentally ephemeral aesthetic:

Architecture does not come into this question for the ephemeral theatre. Its drama could be performed in any and every place, and caprice and phantasy might put together stages one more fantastic than the other. Something like a house of cards,

with the suggestion that, should we lean against it, it would topple over. It needs nimble invention more than profound imagination [...].

Builders might have to be called in, [...] Cannot you imagine a stage held up by supports as thin as storks' legs, trimmed with the plumage of birds, and here and there a long string of pearls hanging? Powder, beautiful powder all over the floor, perfumes... [...]

But here I am picturing one perishable theatre, though there might be the rougher kind wherein even lath and plaster, and certainly paper, could play their parts; with sand instead of powder, fishers' or fowlers' nets instead of lace, torches instead of perfumed candles. But one need not go far with eyes and ears in one's head to pick out the myriads of perishable things of this world and bring them to our service.¹⁷

However fanciful (not to say crazy) these visions may seem to us, they are significant in that they look at materials from the point of view of what it does, with its own makeup. While in the field of aesthetics, hylomorphism tends to prevail,¹⁸ Craig is interested in materials' qualities, potential and the "part[s]" that they could play, without needing to be shaped and arranged (or only marginally) by a "builder". On contemporary stages, this movement to empower matter is constantly asserting itself.

Empowering matter

Two ways of empowering materials have been opened up by (or counter to?) artists' manipulations.

Matter on stage, without or beyond form

Because, as we have said, matter is generally not viewed independently of its form, the first way of liberating it consists in having it exist on stage as itself, that is, sometimes without, sometimes beyond any sort of formatting.

In Maguy Marin's *Umwelt* (2008), or more recently, Nathalie Béasse's *Le bruit des arbres qui tombent* (2017), matter (to be precise, stones, earth, water, plastic sheeting, various textiles) is explored in its rawest physical reality – these artists playing in particular on what the empirical philosophers called "primary" qualities of body, i.e. extension, solidity, movement, rest and number.¹⁹ By turns spread over the stage, projected, thrown, falling violently to the ground, sinking or floating, these materials are not pressed into the service of a form exterior to themselves; as themselves, their presence is not only plastic (diversity of color and textures), but also acoustic (the sounds produced when they come into play give the show its rhythm), gravitational (when matter comes into play, the performers need specific types of posture control) and kinesthetic (the materials' impetus and movements trigger resonances in spectators' bodies).

While in the previous examples, materials' qualities and dynamics are explored for themselves, without any shaping to unify or stabilize the effects, other artists choose rather to bring it into play beyond any form it might have had before its physical organization was pulled to pieces. Waste, refuse, garbage of all kinds pile up regularly on the stages of Rodrigo Garcia (in particular in *The Story of Ronald the McDonald's Clown*, first performed in 2004, and in *Golgotha Picnic*, first performed in 2011) or Vincent Macaigne – a director who, like Garcia, works with the effects of destroying and accumulating matter, but who also has a very strong interest in the effects that dirty,

dripping “formless” materials can have – fluid (like the paint in *Idiot!*, first staged in 2009) or viscous (like the mud in *Au moins j’aurai laissé un beau cadavre*, first performed in 2011).

In these shows, the artists are breaking with the aesthetic imperative to shape matter but this transgression does not radically challenge the semiological register of performance. While exploring the “fundamental properties” of matter – “mass” and “volume”, these directors also intend to make use of its symbolic powers either to denounce, in an indexical way, the ideology of overconsumption that characterizes Western society, the “throw-away society”,²⁰ or to use motifs of stain and chaos that matter both denotes and connotes, to question the dominant order of values and powers.²¹

As for the second way of empowering matter, it moves much more sharply away from a logic of significations to a logic of sensations.

Matter, creator of forms

This second way to empower matter is not to extricate it from the form to which it is subjugated, but to make it exist, just as it is, as a creator of forms: the characteristic “powers” of matter, which the hylomorphic tradition was already tending to recognize, then become the very subject of the performance.²² Instead of being considered as a “neutral and passive” substance,²³ entirely at the service of the form that it takes after the artist has bent it to her will, matter is considered, if not as a completely active element, at least as a force that responds and acts like a substance with its own properties, abilities and requirements – which are a seedbed for “implicit forms.”²⁴ In practice, plastic artists have of course never ignored the existence of these “implicit forms”: they always know what they are taking on when they choose to work with such and such a material and such and such a tool – even if it means engaging in a struggle with the material and trying to “work against” the direction and the forms that it pushes them to take.²⁵ But what is new is that stage artists are choosing to make a performance of this dialogue with matter’s active powers, in three main ways.

The first is to stage artists’ physical engagement with matter. This is particularly true of the choreographer, Josef Nadj and the plastic artist, Miquel Barceló in *Paso Doble* (2006), as they take on an exhausting battle, hammering and cutting at clay, whose viscosity restricts their movements while at the same time making possible numerous metamorphoses.²⁶ The successive dabs in clay by Marta Pereira and Jeanne Marquis in *L’écho des creux* (2019), or the wax melted and modeled by Justine Macadoux in *Wax* (2016), both shows created by Renaud Herbin, also involve new bodily states and altered contours.

In other cases, this meeting of bodies is less frank and direct – the resistance of a material too small or fragile to be easily grasped and manipulated forcing artists to imagine other ways of entering into contact with their material partners. Maude Arès fashions tools from bits and pieces, allowing her to move and meticulously pile up debris and fragments. With the tip of artificial fingers, she can detect their rough and worn spots that make her undertaking possible.²⁷ As for the dancer and performance artist, Laurent Chanel, he relies on air currents caused by his movements and his

breath to sustain the growth of a helium foam cloud which behaves unpredictably in *Cthulhu Cthulhu* (2019).

It is *with* and *through* matter that these movements emerge, using the openings that they offer and working with the energies flowing from their properties. The introduction of new materials has given rise to a renewal of gestural and choreographic language that is given expression in the idiosyncratic work of Phia Ménard (a juggler by training), who explores the (un)jugglability of elements such as ice in *P.P.P.* (created in 2008), or the wind in *Vortex* (2011) and *L'après-midi d'un foehn* (*Afternoon of a foehn*) (2010).²⁸ In *Maison Mère* (2019), the first part of her *Contes immoraux* (*Immoral Tales*), Phia Ménard casts herself as the (super)heroic architect of a cardboard Parthenon that is heavy, bulky, and constantly threatening to overcome human strength with its precarious balance and lack of maneuverability – before being given over to the ravages of winds and torrents of water which finally pelt down on the stage. The choreographer, Jordi Galí, since creating *T* in 2009, also finds in the ways of organizing construction materials like wood (*Ciel*, 2010), tires, stones, ladders (*Abscisse*, 2012) and ropes (*Maibaum*, 2015), the possibility of a choreographic expression in which these materials function as both constraints and partners at the same time, and the performers themselves become both materials and builders.

A second method is for stage artists to explore the situations but also the thoughts that the material and its specific features inspire in them, in ways that can be by turn playful and poetic, farcical or philosophical. This approach is at the heart of the textual and stage work of Pierre Meunier, an artist who, before tackling the viscous matter of silt in 2017, took an interest especially in the mineral world of stones – in *Le Tas* (2002) and *Au milieu du désordre* (2004) – but also in the world of metallic materials and objects – in *Le chant du ressort* (1999) and *La bobine de Ruhmkorff* (2012).²⁹ Turning the stage into a huge laboratory where various experimental devices were placed, the shows at La Belle Meunière put on stage scientists, lecturers, and inventors in awe before the mysteries of matter and its movements. In more of a poetic than explanatory way they testify to their attraction for phenomena like falling, spring motion or the formation of heaps, seeking less to understand than to awake a strong curiosity in their regard.

A final method is indeed to let unfold on stage (once or throughout the performance) a show with only matter and the reveries that its metamorphoses may provoke.

This is the case of *Stifters Dinge* (2007) – a show including projections of light, sound, and recorded voices, and chemical transformations of states of water, which the director and composer, Heiner Goebbels presents as a “no-man show”. It is also the case of Mette Ingværsten’s “The Artificial Nature Series” cycle, based on the choreography of materials and the elements. Particularly in *Evaporated Landscapes* (2009), she intensifies our perceptions and the sensations of natural phenomena through a “performance installation” for ephemeral materials (bubbles, foam, vapor): in the shadow, on the fringes, a hand turns a handle to spread a thick mist that gradually covers the stage, then the spectators’ legs, dissolving as it goes the heaps of foam that were laid out there. A mist that becomes in turn a sea, a sea of clouds and then a cloud hanging over the spectators’ heads, before dissipating. Both natural and artificial phenomena also inspire the plastic and performance artist, Gwendoline Robin, to compose and activate ephemeral landscape fictions (*Cratère N°6899*, created in 2016, *AGUA*, in 2018) with her favorite elements, water, fire, glass and earth. Physical reactions, deterioration, and explosions transmute “a landscape that had been almost desert until then”,³⁰ submitted

to stimuli from a human hand which, almost like an alchemist, makes it exist while at the same time threatening to destroy it. In *Rêveries magnétiques* (2012), Michel Ozeray and Anne Buguet also set in motion chemical reactions by mixing liquids and solids in jars filled with water. The effects of dissolving, vibration and reflection create nebula and galaxies undergoing slow transformations.

“Post-anthropocentric” stages?

These materials are repopulating the stage today, after having been relegated for a long time to the wings or outside the theater walls, rendered invisible even while they accumulated in the folds of a curtain, or the floorboards. We can take away two things from this. First, awe. The awe that Pierre Meunier seeks to recreate every evening, as much for the actors as for the spectators.³¹ Awe which, in spite of the silence of matter, can seize all the attention and refocus delivery and attention on stage and in the auditorium, thus altering the basis of traditional theatrical practice. Next, a reconfiguration. While part of Western theater has been organized from an anthropocentric perspective, the introduction of these materials on center stage and their paradoxical skill shatters the truism of “the ‘copresence’ of living beings within the ‘here and now’” of the performance, undermining the role and the expectations of both actors and spectators. As the dramatist and performance artist Augusto Corrieri has pointed out, having different modes of existence cohabiting on stage requires the invention of an “expanded” dramaturgy or a “dramaturgy of the background” to include non-humans.³² He appeals for manifestos calling for “a theatre based on cosmic interrelations, featuring subatomic matter and non-matter, as well as entities, scales and temporalities that escape human understanding altogether”.³³

In *Postdramatic theatre*, Hans-Thies Lehmann envisaged the same “alternative to the anthropocentric ideal”, looking into aesthetics in which “human bodies join with objects, animals and energy lines into a single reality”.³⁴ He then proposed a post-anthropocentric redefinition of the stage, based on three ways in which the living actor can be present: in the first case, he wrote, the actor is absent, leaving on stage “the theater of objects”; in the second case, he is decentered by the use of animated machines; in the last case, he is integrated, as one element among others, into a new landscape-like spatial structure.

While the “post” prefix used by Lehmann leads us to think along teleological lines about this concern with the materiality of the world of things and this decentering as an outdated theatrical model being surpassed, it appears that these material undertakings have a much longer, and probably cyclical, history. Well before the experiments in our day seeking to create scales other than human on stage, the theater of Aeschylus put on stage winds, rivers and mountains with which men had to make alliances to ensure the survival of their societies. The open air Greek theater was constantly having real interactions with the external landscape, and with natural (birds flying over) and meteorological events (rain, wind, thunder) that were liable to occur during a show. By opening his theater to the entire *kosmos*, Aeschylus seemed to anticipate the *posthuman*:³⁵ he invites thoughts of man having to get to grips with his external material environment, and to reflect in the palpable reality of the stage on the ontological continuities between human and non-human. As a matter of fact, the attention paid to these material interactions not only by Aeschylus but also by Sophocles and Euripides has given rise to the publication in 2018 of an American book

dedicated to the “materialities” of Greek tragedy, discussed in terms of “New Materialism” theoretical models.³⁶

The heuristic dimension of the new materialisms

Restructuring ontologies

Decidedly interdisciplinary, the “New Materialisms” are established in the humanities and social sciences in fields as varied as political science, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, history, or archaeology.³⁷ Despite their diversity and their specific inflections, these schools all dispute any classic ontological hierarchy based on the superiority of the subject over the object, of the living over the inanimate, or of the spiritual over the material. Bruno Latour’s writings gave them an initial impetus: his *Actor Network Theory* postulates that any social event results from a multiplicity of interactions between human and non-human “actors” or “actants”, that cannot be accounted for using the traditional categories of *subjects* and *objects*. “To use the word ‘actor’”, Latour writes, “means that it is never clear who and what is acting when we act since an actor on stage is never alone in acting”.³⁸ Taking up Michel Serres’ “quasi-objects” concept to denote human/non-human collectives (anything from cars backed up on the highway, to a wood fire, or climate change), Latour defends the political project of a “democracy extended to things”.³⁹ Objects and materials, such as a simple brick wall, must be made to talk, “to offer descriptions of themselves, to produce scripts of what they are *making others*—humans or non- humans —do”.⁴⁰

Under the name of “New Materialisms” the various North American trends influenced by this work have been gathered for the first time in the 2010 book edited by Diana Coole and Samantha Frost.⁴¹ Claiming to pay more attention to daily material realities, they defend a posthumanist conception of matter as living being with its own agency, which must therefore lead to a change in political and economic paradigm.⁴² Published in the same year, *Vibrant matter* by Jane Bennett quickly became a “Bible” for new materialists of all persuasions: bringing under the umbrella of “matter” realities as varied as objects, water, metal, dust, food, trash, smoke, electricity etc., her clearly stated goal is to “theorize a *vitality intrinsic to materiality as such*, and to detach materiality from the figures of passive, mechanistic or divinely infused substance”.⁴³ In a 2013 interview, she did however qualify the exclusively “intrinsic” origin of this vitality, proposing rather a “polycentric” model of action, based on a “human-nonhuman assemblage”.⁴⁴

In the fields of literature and philosophy, although it is not always possible to know in which direction influences and borrowing travel, other theoretical approaches like Bill Brown’s “Thing theory” or Timothy Morton and Graham Harman’s “Object-Oriented Ontology” (OOO) start from comparable ontological assumptions, such as denial of any hierarchization between human beings and non-human things or matter. Firmly anchored in postmodern literature, Bill Brown incorporates into literary criticism specific analytical tools to reveal the moment when “things” break out of their condition of object to assert themselves counter to our expectations.⁴⁵ For their part, the OOO philosophers are developing a decentered ontology model that can take the objects themselves as its starting point.⁴⁶ In this undifferentiated “flat ontology”⁴⁷ everything deserves equal attention, and is considered both mutually autonomous and

“withdrawn”⁴⁸: no human consciousness can claim to have access to it, any more than they can know each other.⁴⁹

Performative powers and political omissions

While propositions made by artists past and present seem to resonate with these theoretical approaches, what heuristic or political impact can publications such as those by Bruno Latour or Jane Bennett have on the performing arts? Do they merely confirm ancient intuitions, and serve as “theoretical backing” for practitioners who nowadays have to provide quasi-scientific arguments in order to obtain grants, or do they open up new practical possibilities for the stage?

In academia, researchers have already adopted this theoretical corpus to take account of very diverse materialities on stage. In a book by Marlis Schweitzer and Joanne Zerdy published in 2014, the authors pay the same attention to matter as the new materialisms do, and describe the ways in which “objects and things script, choreograph, direct, push, pull and otherwise animate their human collaborators”.⁵⁰ Noting the lexical borrowing from theater in these theoretical models (Bruno Latour’s “actor”, or Brian Massumi’s “gesture”)⁵¹, they emphasize the role that performing arts can play, in both practice and theory in the definition of new non-anthropocentric methodologies. As the quote above indicates, these authors were however more interested in objects with a recognizable and defined form than in *matter*, which is more undefinable and formless, even though one of the chapters is about a performance in which the partner is a Scottish river.⁵² Another anglophone book, this time on puppetry, edited by Dassia Posner, Claudia Orenstein and John Bell and published in 2014 takes the same direction.⁵³ Several chapters test the pertinence of the idea of matter having internal agency to account for the way puppeteers constantly waver between the impression that they are bringing the puppet to life by conscious handling and the occasionally simultaneous sensation that this life force issues from the material itself which simply dictates to the human how to handle it. In this *Agôn* issue, the puppeteer, Dinaïg Stall proffers her own exploration of the subject, enjoying these neo-materialists’ recognition that matter has its own life, while acknowledging that this matter only comes to life in conditions strictly controlled by herself in the context of a performance constructed by a human hand.

Like any theoretical system, the new materialism corpus is perhaps above all an opportunity for ideas to “rub up against each other”, proving to be more or less illuminating, and revealing possibilities for development as well as their limits. While their political project, intersecting with feminist, posthumanist and ecological criticism as it does, is appealing and legitimately resonates with themes that are relevant to the performing arts, it has some theoretical weaknesses that cannot be ignored. For example, the new materialists’ proclaimed preference for “anything-no-matter-what”, open to an occasionally disconcerting range of materials, tends to underplay the inevitable differences in the agency or responsiveness of materials. Referring to “vibrant matter” as a whole is in contradiction with an intuitive experience, which artists also play on, when they select one material rather than another because of its particular way of responding to their hand or body. This leveling up, as it were, minimizes in the end the strength of the neo-materialist position.

In the same way, finding human and non-human “assemblages” in all places and at all times, apart from the fact that it initially raises awareness, also leaves vague the

specific contribution of each of these “actants” within the assemblage. The observation that the musician is nothing without his instrument, the soldier without his weapon, the craftsman without his tools and raw materials, does not suffice to explain how tasks are “shared” or to define the agency of each of the elements in play. It is therefore doubtful that it will succeed in challenging the so-called “old” ontological hierarchies.

Moreover, the “magical” language to which these theorists readily have recourse to *give life* to matter reveals an internal contradiction which seems to remain unexplained. Neo-materialist writings certainly make abundant use of poetic metaphors and performative wording when explaining the vitality of matter, without questioning the power of words to confer this potency in which they see a principle of internal life.⁵⁴ The contradiction is all the more striking because at the same time these authors do not hesitate to condemn the anthropocentrism of human language and to seek to free themselves from it to make matter itself “talk”⁵⁵ – a philosophical project that raises a question, even if it can also open up fertile lines of artistic inquiry. Likewise, one must not ignore the ethical and political pitfalls of valuing the agency of matter more than human agency. As Andrew Sofer reminds us, “agency in the sense of basic self-determination remains an aspiration” for a very large number of people throughout the world⁵⁶ and so the question of the agency of matter might appear to be rather a self-indulgent theoretical preoccupation.⁵⁷ For his part, Gregor Quack considers that the infatuation with OOO or speculative realism theories during the last few years in contemporary art circles is to a large extent related to the fact that they are in line with – and justify – the dominant logic in the art market.⁵⁸ They have had the effect of deifying the “thing” to the detriment of taking any (subjective, interpretative) position, and more widely, or of any consideration of the (social, economic, political) contexts and conditions of a work.

The studies in this issue, dealing exclusively with contemporary propositions, are not exempt from these critical and analytical difficulties. Neither can we escape the difficulties of theorization that face us when we try to discuss matter at the risk of tautology, impoverished description, or magical language, and depoliticization. Perhaps it is by clearly identifying these points of debate and tension that we can hope to make theater and performance studies a legitimate partner in the formulation of this interdisciplinary epistemology of matter. The contributions to this issue focus on unusual materials and stages, which makes it possible to draw out contrasts and nuances. All materials do not possess the same “theatric potential”⁵⁹. Some objects and materials are “loaded” and others not: the stage’s work of “distillation”⁶⁰ can help to make illuminating distinctions. The stage or rather stages: matter is not acted on and no doubt does not act in the same way depending on whether it is on the stage of a theater where all the resources of language are deployed to transform it, on a dance stage or in a circus ring.⁶¹ On these diverse stages, places “where paradigms of action are gathered” according to Jacques Rancière⁶² and where matter coexists necessarily with the performer, it will be possible to attempt to get a better grasp of what the *agencies* of matter can do in the diversity of its relations with the human being.

Relationships with matter

Finally matter’s presence and actions are formed and experienced in relationships that make these material things exist at the same time as they inform a sort of “materiality

system”, characterizing the “type of relationship we maintain with matter, and more generally, with the physical world that surrounds us.”⁶³ The urgency of “rematerializing”⁶⁴ and acknowledging the need for material continuity between human beings and the physical world continues to drive philosophical debates at a time when ecological, economic and cultural interdependence render the separation of the human being from nature untenable.⁶⁵ It imbues artists’ discourse, and their practices just as much.

Is it perhaps in their studios and laboratories, where actions and tools for manufacturing and giving life to matter are invented, researched and refined, that the diversity of these relationships can be detected in the first place?⁶⁶ In any case it was a concern with making these processes visible that motivated Richard Serra, Carl Andre, Barry le Va, and Bruce Nauman in the “Anti-Illusion: Materials/Procedures” exhibition, in 1969 at the Whitney Museum, giving value for the first time not to materials themselves but to new uses that can be made of them. The long duration of this process is apparent in the succession of photographs in the exhibition catalog. It is made up of negotiations, unforeseen events and dependence on material vagaries, from which emerge forms, new connections between things and phenomena that are usually distinct, and, most importantly, new ways of relating to them.

This relational primacy shakes the perception that the physical world is made up of stable, inert self-contained forms and that we do not know how to enter into relation with them. Rather than an internal agency, should we prefer more measured terms, like “lent agency”,⁶⁷ “shared agency” or “fluid agency”? The interpretation and analysis of performances in this issue makes it possible at least to grasp just how unstable, fluctuating, and precarious this relationship is, constantly falling back on the artist’s balancing act, at every instant of a performance. A performance like that of Laurent Chanel in *Cthulhu Cthulhu* (2019) is more an expression of this vulnerable interdependence between a human being and some helium foam than an all-out celebration of the agency of matter.⁶⁸ The swaying of the foam column and the marks that alter its surface make its porosity and its extreme sensitivity to air flows perceptible above all. Flows support its growth at the same time as they destabilize it, and the performer collaborates with them in an attentive choreography which he invents in the present moment.

The articles in this issue all examine the forms taken by relationships like this, and their implications. Relationships that dramatize, disturb, make denser or on the contrary thin out the space *between* things to make it less obvious. Some sort of hybrid (ranging from a simple covering with the material through to metamorphosis) is produced by an encounter with materials whose potential for submerging, dirtying or staining has symbolic implications as well as subversive powers.

Whether it is the daubing and spraying of fecal and organic matter commented on by Blodwenn Mauffret in an article on carnival materials, or spilling paint in the shows by Roméo Castellucci, Vincent Macaigne and Jan Fabre compared by Kenza Kernite, impurity is valued for its transgressive quality. Transgression of the established socio-political order in one case, transgression of aesthetic frameworks and moral rules in the other, but also above all, in both cases, transgression of the very limits of the body: the loss of differentiation of bodily fluids that exude from, and run down, exhausted performers’ bodies tends to give tangible form to these exchanges from inside and outside. Or rather, they throw into crisis the existence of an inside and an outside to

emphasize the material continuity that places these bodies on the same plane: liquids come back to the surface, only for these surfaces to fade, pointing in these articles towards the fantasy of an original unity, a matrix or primordial chaos. Without a doubt the clay wall traversed by Miquel Barceló and Josef Nadj in *Paso Doble*, analyzed here by Oriane Maubert, can convey all by itself how things can interpenetrate each other: the artists do not enter *into* the backdrop, they devise new metamorphic figures *with* and *through* it, making use of clay's potential for taking any shape while not settling into any of them. Neither figure nor background seem relevant to the dehierarchization taking place on stage.

Likewise Julie Postel describes as wavy, vibrating or immaterial those *non-figurative* presences which linger on stage although they are no longer embodied in puppet-objects with fixed, clearly defined and identifiable contours. These expressions of the non-figurative, in which, as she puts it, matter becomes nothing more than a "passage", create tension between empty and full, inviting us to shift our attention to the *in-between*. Cyrille Roussial examines a similar threat to the object, detecting in various juggling shows a renewal of expression, dramaturgy and movement in order to deal with matter. In these two articles, taking matter as the starting point is above all an opportunity to examine changes in the codes and traditions of two artistic fields structured by the body-object relationship, but whose received ideas on manipulation and animation should be reviewed in the light of the inclusion of new materials.

Finally, the eminently emotional nature of these relationships with material emerges from the interviews conducted with artists for this publication (Maude Arès, Élise Vigneron, Renaud Herbin). It is not insignificant that they talk about their attraction to such and such an element in terms of a story, memory or dream: stories that testify to the particular attention that these materials require or provoke – whether it is the ice for Elise Vigneron's puppets,⁶⁹ the ceramics that inspired Renaud Herbin's latest creation, the clay carrying the memory of all the hands and all the shapes it has taken, mentioned by Dinaïg Stall in an interlude, the materials of the forges, workshops, factories and also the paths walked by Pierre Meunier, or the scattered scraps gleaned on her way by Maude Arès during a journey in Latin America, and which she strives with "sensitivity and tenacity" to assemble, repair, and hold together temporarily.

NOTES

1. This question was at the heart of the international conference "Agrès, scénographie et éco-conception," organised by the Centre National pour les Arts du Cirque, in Châlons-en-Champagne, (November 15-17, 2019). This symposium was part of the "Cycle de vie des matériaux du spectacle vivant" project of the ICIMA chair (Circus and Puppet Innovation Chair). URL: <https://icima.hypotheses.org/cycle-de-vie-des-materiaux-du-spectacle-vivant>
2. *Souda*, s.v. Thespis (θ 282); scholion on Aristophanes, *Knights*, 522.
3. e.g. the design, the general shape (circular, rectangular, amphitheatre, horseshoe...) of the spaces dedicated to performers and spectators.

4. Cf. J.-C. Moretti, *Théâtre et société dans la Grèce antique*, Paris, Le Livre de Poche, 2011; J.-C. Moretti, "L'architecture des théâtres en Grèce antique avant l'époque impériale: un point de vue sur les études publiées entre 1994 et 2014," *Perspective* [En ligne], 2 | 2014, uploaded on June 30, 2016, consulted on April 30, 2019. URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/perspective/5606>
5. Souda, s.v. Eschyle (α1 357). Cf. F. Kimmel-Clauzet, *Morts, tombeaux et cultes des poètes grecs étude de la survie des grands poètes des époques archaïque et classique en Grèce ancienne*, De Boccard: Scripta antiqua, 51, 2013.
6. Here and until otherwise stated, the quotes are taken from M.-M. Mervant-Roux, "Les deux théâtres," "Theatre and Film Studies 2010," Tokyo, International Institute for Education and Research in Theatre and Film Arts Global COE Programme, Theatre Museum, Waseda University, 2011, Vol 5, pp. 159-176. URL: <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00655302/document>.
7. Cf. S. Blondet, *Les pièces rivales des répertoires de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne, du Théâtre du Marais et de l'illustre Théâtre. Deux décennies de concurrence théâtrale parisienne (1629-1647)*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 2017.
8. These issues have long been at the heart of the research work of M. Freydefont. See for instance: Études théâtrales, n°11-12, *Le Lieu, la scène, la salle, la ville. Dramaturgie, scénographie et architecture à la fin du XIXe siècle en Europe* (ed. Marcel Freydefont), UCLouvain, Centre d'études théâtrales, 1997; *Théâtre/Public* n°215, *Place du théâtre, forme de la ville* (ed. Marcel Freydefont & Luc Boucris), January 2015.
9. See L. K. Fried and T. J. May, *Greening Up Our Houses: A Guide to a More Ecologically Sound Theatre*, Drama Pub, 1994; E. Jones, *A Practical Guide to Greener Theatre: Introduce Sustainability Into Your Productions*, Taylor & Francis, 2013.
10. Here and until otherwise stated, the quotes are taken from: Y. Ciret, "La sublime genèse du Théâtre du Radeau" (2008). URL: https://www.nonfiction.fr/article-1656-la_sublime_genese_du_theatre_du_radeau.htm
11. P. Bouchain, "Des lieux pour soi et pour les autres. Propos recueillis par Amandine Livet et Eric Vautrin," *Théâtre/Public*, n°214, oct-dec. 2014, pp. 88-89.
12. E.G. Craig, *The theatre - advancing*, Boston, Little, Brown, and Company, 1919, pp. 9-18 and pp. 18-25.
13. E.G. Craig, *Ibid.* pp 11-12.
14. Louis Becq de Fouquières, *L'art de la mise en scène. Essai d'esthétique théâtrale*, Chap. XX, "De la loi d'apparence," Paris, G. Charpentier, 1884, pp. 90-92.
15. See "Les décors et les accessoires" in E. Zola, *Le naturalisme au théâtre*, Paris, Charpentier, 1881, pp. 81-102.
16. E.G. Craig, *Ibid.*, p. 18.
17. E.G. Craig, *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.
18. Developed by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics*, hylemorphism (from *hylê*, "wood, matter of which a thing is made," and *morphê*, "form, disposition, figure") is a philosophical doctrine which, in contrast to Platonic dualism, conceives of being - the substrate, the "substance" - as "the immediate unity of matter and form": according to Aristotle, "that which is informed cannot exist without that which informs, and vice versa" (Cf. P.-M. Morel, "Matière et philosophie première. À propos du livre H de la *Métaphysique* d'Aristote," in *Philonsorbonne* [Online], 10 | 2016, pp. 158-167. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/philonsorbonne/819>). If this hylemorphic unity has the effect of raising matter, hitherto discredited, to a level worthy of consideration "in the treatises of metaphysics," it is however only "in functional correlation with form" (*Ibid.* p. 167). In Aristotle's view, in fact, "matter is itself the bearer of very precise determinations" (*Ibid.*, p. 163), which have "a share in substantiality" (*Ibid.*, p. 167), but according to a specific mode of being: that of "power" - form being on the side of enacted reality (*Ibid.*, pp. 163-164). Moving from the metaphysical to the aesthetic plane, this inseparability of form and matter is double-edged: as such, matter seems in fact doomed to have no interest of its own; its

qualities and potentialities become a topic of interest only insofar as they are part of a form, or have been put into shape - a form which, in the end, attracts most attention.

19. See J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689).

20. See I. Bellin et C. Duquennoi, "Du système d'objets au système de déchets," *Lettre du séminaire "Arts & Sociétés"*, n°110, Sciences Po. URL: <http://www.sciencespo.fr/artsetsocietes/fr/archives/4095>

21. See, in this *Agôn* issue, Kenza Jernite's study of the use of "paint-material" in Jan Fabre, Romeo Castellucci and Vincent Macaigne (<https://journals.openedition.org/agon/6332>), and the one Blodwenn Mauffret devotes to the throwing of materials in various European and Afro-Caribbean carnivals. (<https://journals.openedition.org/agon/6048>).

22. See above note 18.

23. G. Simondon, "Anthropo-technologie" (1961) in *Sur la technique*, Paris, PUF, 2014, p. 368.

24. G. Simondon, quoted by E. Zhong, "Des formes cachées dans la matière. La bricolage de l'art participatif à la lumière de la pensée de Gilbert Simondon," *Techniques & Culture*, 2015/2 (n° 64), p. 96-99. URL: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-techniques-et-culture-2015-2-page-96.htm>.

25. *Ibid.*

26. See, in this *Agôn* issue, the article which Oriane Maubert devotes to this performance "Soutenir l'argile, soutenir les corps" (<https://journals.openedition.org/agon/6287>).

27. See, in this *Agôn* issue, the interview conducted with this artist: "De la délicatesse et de la ténacité. La poétique matérielle et attentionnelle de Maude Arès" (<https://journals.openedition.org/agon/5970>)

28. See, in this *Agôn* issue, Cyrille Roussial's article on the mutations of juggling deriving from the renewal of its materials: "Se positionner face aux éléments. Pour une lecture matérielle des modes d'incarnation du jonglage" (<https://journals.openedition.org/agon/6245>).

29. See, in this *Agôn* issue, the text in which Pierre Meunier freely explores the origins of his attraction for matter: "Matières d'enfance" (<https://journals.openedition.org/agon/6192>)

30. Presentation of the performance AGUA (2018) by Gwendoline Robin. URL: <http://www.gwendolinerobin.be>.

31. See M. Losco-Léna, "Pierre Meunier: contemplations idiotes et réjouissances vagabondes" in *Théâtre/Public* n°203, dossier "États de la scène actuelle: 2009-2011" (ed. O. Neveux & C. Triau), January-March 2012, pp. 102-107.

32. A. Corrieri, "The Rock, the Butterfly, the Moon, and the Cloud. Notes on Dramaturgy in an Ecological Age," in *The practice of dramaturgy. Working on Actions in Performance* (ed. K. Georgelou, E. Protopapa, D. Theodoridou), London, Anagram Books, 2016, pp. 233-246.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 235: "we would have to start writing manifestos for a theatre based on cosmic interrelations, featuring subatomic matter and non-matter, as well as entities, scales, and temporalities that escape human understanding altogether."

34. H.-T. Lehmann, *Le Théâtre postdramatique*, Paris, L'Arche, 2002, p. 127.

35. See A.-S. Noel, "Hybris and hybridity in Aeschylus' *Persians*: a posthumanist perspective on Xerxes' expedition," in G. M., Chesi and F. Spiegel, *Classical Literature and Posthumanism*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019, pp. 259-265.

36. M. Telò, et M. Mueller (eds.), *The Materialities of Greek Tragedy: Objects and Affect in Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.

37. References are cited throughout this development. For the historical field, H. Schouwenburg, "Back to the Future? History, Material Culture and New Materialism." *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity*, 2015; for archaeology, see K. Knappet and L. Malafouris (notably *Material agency: towards a non-anthropocentric approach*, Berlin, Springer Science & Business Media, 2008) and I. Hodder (*Entangled: an archaeology of the relationships between humans and things*, Hoboken, John Wiley & Sons, 2012).

38. B. Latour, *Reassembling the social: An introduction to social life*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 46.
39. B. Latour, *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes. Essai d'anthropologie symétrique*, La Découverte, 2006, p. 22 (our translation).
40. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
41. D. Coole, S. Frost, *New Materialisms. Ontology, agency and politics*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2010.
42. The authors of this book propose, for example, to grant greater recognition to the fact that the stability of states is entirely dependent on their reasoned exploitation of raw materials; more radically, given that they consider that the capacity for political action of human beings cannot be detached from their constant interactions with the material environment, they claim the need to make matter itself a political agent.
43. J. Bennett, *Vibrant matter, A political ecology of things*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2010, p. XIII: "My aim, again, is to theorize a vitality intrinsic to materiality as such, and to detach materiality from the figures of passive, mechanistic, or divinely infused substance".
44. J. Watson, "Eco-sensibilities: An Interview with Jane Bennett," *Minnesota Review*, n° 81, 2013 (New Series), p. 149 sq. (pp. 147-158).
45. B. Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry*, 28 (1), 2001, p. 1-22; see also *A sense of things: the object matter of American literature*, University of Chicago Press, 2010; *Other things*, University of Chicago Press, 2015.
46. T. Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2013; G. Harman, *Object-oriented ontology: A new theory of everything*, London, Penguin UK, 2018.
47. G. Harman, *Ibid.*, p. 256.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 258-259: "Fire and cotton are also opaque to each other even if they are not 'conscious' in the same way as humans or animals."
50. M. Schweitzer and J. Zerdy, *Performing Objects and Theatrical Things*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; Palgrave Macmillan, 2014: 6.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
52. M. Donald, "Entided, Enwatered, Enwinded: Human/More-than-Human Agencies in Site-specific Performance," in M. Schweitzer and J. Zerdy, *Ibid.*, 118-134.
53. D. N. Posner, C. Orenstein & J. Bell (eds.), *The Routledge companion to puppetry and material performance*, London, Routledge, 2014.
54. For this criticism made in several disciplinary fields, see T.C. Lindstrøm, "Agency 'in itself'. A discussion of inanimate, animal and human agency," *Archaeological dialogues*, 2015, vol. 22, no 2, pp. 207-238; A. Sofer, "Getting on with Things: The Currency of Objects in Theatre and Performance Studies," *Theatre Journal*, 2016, vol. 68, pp. 673-684; A. Cole, "The Call of Things; A Critique of Object-Oriented Ontologies," *the Minnesota Review*, 2013, n° 80, pp. 106-118.
55. J. Bennett, *Ibid.*, p. 2-3: "We can give a voice to a thing-power (...) give voice to a vitality intrinsic to materiality".
56. A. Sofer, *Ibid.*, p. 682. See also P. Hert, "Bruno Latour, *Politiques de la nature. Comment faire entrer les sciences en démocratie*," *Questions de communication* [En ligne], 1 | 2002, mis en ligne le 12 décembre 2012, consulté le 07 octobre 2019: "Pour le dire autrement: s'il [Latour] est très bien attentionné à l'égard des non-humains, en leur conférant une 'âme' politique, que fait-il en revanche de ceux – malheureux hommes, indécis et si changeants ! – qui ne veulent pas suivre les programmes politiques ?".
57. M. Chen makes a comparable judgment, showing that the new materialisms may renew social and racial hierarchies in spite of their "egalitarian aesthetics" (in E. Apter, E. Atkins, A.

Avanessian, B. Brown, G. Bruno, J. Bryan-Wilson, D. Graham Burnett, *et al.*, "A Questionnaire on Materialisms," *October Magazine*, no 155, Ltd. and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, January 2016, p. 21-22).

58. G. Quack in E. Apter, *et al.*, "A Questionnaire on Materialisms," *op. cit.*, p. 80-82.

59. Dinaïg Stall, in her contribution to this *Agôn* issue (<https://journals.openedition.org/agon/5892>).

60. O. Neveux, *Contre le théâtre politique*, Paris, La Fabrique, 2019, p. 232.

61. In this respect, the work of M. Telò and M. Mueller (*The Materialities of Greek Tragedy: Objects and Affect in Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018) may lack nuances: it is questionable to postulate that the objects and materials of ancient Greek theatre are animated by a principle of internal vitality when external divine powers (explicitly rejected by J. Bennett, *Ibid.*, 2010, p. XIII) and the power of poetic language constantly affect and transform them.

62. J. Rancière, *La méthode de la scène*, Fécamp, Éditions Lignes, 2018, p. 48.

63. A. Picon, *La matérialité de l'architecture*, Marseille, Éditions Parenthèses, 2018, p. 14.

64. See F. Dagognet, *Rematérialiser. Matières et matérialismes*, Paris, Vrin, 1989.

65. See D. Quessada, *L'Inséparé*, Paris, PUF, 2013; T. Ingold, "Materials against materiality" (*Archeological Dialogues* 14 (1) 16-20, Cambridge University Press, 2007), where the author points out the limits and contradictions of the numerous discourses on the materiality of the world and material culture rather than on the qualities of the materials themselves.

66. In this perspective, see what the artists of the Corps-Objet-Image platform have to say about their gestures, materials and production tools, *Corps-Objet-Image*, "Alter, l'autre de la matière," Strasbourg, TJP Éditions, 2016, pp. 22-39. URL: <http://www.corps-objet-image.com/revue-coi-02>

67. See C. Severi, *L'objet-personne, une anthropologie de la croyance visuelle*, Paris, rue d'Ulm éditions, 2017 (concept of "agentivité prêtée").

68. See a photo of this performance on the home page of this issue, and other works by the artist on his website: <https://www.arn.land>.

69. See the performance *Anywhere* (2017), inspired by Henri Bauchau's novel *Œdipe sur la route* (1990), where one follows the wandering and transformation of the mythical figure of Œdipus through the alterations of an ice puppet, grappling with an environment of water and mist.

INDEX

Mots-clés: matter, material history, aesthetics, epistemology, ontology, new materialisms